

# A UNIQUE ORGANIZATION OF MILK DEALERS.

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The City of New York has now attained a population of over 5,000,000 human beings. Daily there flows into the city something over 2,500,000 quarts of milk and cream. This supply comes from seven states and from distances as far away as the eastern part of the State of Ohio. Between 40,000 and 50,000 dairy farms contribute to this enormous body of milk and cream. Practically the entire supply is distributed by dealers who have no ownership or direct control over the dairy farms producing the milk.

It was realized by these milk dealers that to protect themselves as between the farmer or producer and the New York City authorities having control of the sanitary aspects of the milk supply it would be extremely desirable to have an organization—for “In union there is strength”—where they could discuss the sanitary problems involved and mutually help each other in their solution.

For a number of years these same dealers have been organized in an insurance society for the purpose of insuring their creameries and other buildings. They had also had an organization for the purpose of collecting and redistributing lost bottles and cans. The peculiar conditions existing in New York City, with its tenement and flat houses, made such an organization absolutely essential. It was not, however, until 1905 that any serious attempt had been made to organize for the purpose of working out together the sanitary problems involved in the care and distribution of milk. About that time an organization was completed, known as the Association for the Improvement of the Milk Supply of New York. Some fifty-five dealers in Greater New York joined this organization. They met monthly with greater or less regularity and discussed subjects that were pertinent to their business, particularly any new sanitary regulations which may have been promulgated by the local or state authorities. Eminent scientists were occasionally asked to address these meetings. Interest in this organization began to lag within three years after the organization, and finally it practically died a natural death.

Early in 1910 some of the larger dealers who had been interested in the defunct organization, finding that such coöperation was almost essential, got together and revived the association under the name of The New York

Sanitary Milk Dealers Association. In this organized body were to be found most of those who had been in the older organization, and some that had not. The total membership is now about forty. Certain defects in the original association were carefully avoided in the new. Each member was required to subscribe to the Constitution and By-Laws of the association, and particularly to three clauses, which it may be of interest to read at this point:

If elected a member, I agree to coöperate with the other members in seeking to accomplish the objects of the Association as outlined in Article II of the Constitution and to comply with Articles XI and XII of the Constitution.

#### ARTICLE II.

The objects of the Association shall be as follows:

FIRST: The improvement of the milk supply:

(A) Through the coöperation of the members of the Association in adopting advanced scientific methods and machinery to be used in the handling or distribution of the product, so as to produce a more wholesome supply;

(B) Through the enactment and adoption of uniform and improved rules and regulations to be observed by the members, covering the sanitary and other allied conditions, so far as the members of the Association may be able to control or influence the same, of farms and dairies where milk is produced or of creameries and shipping stations, covering conditions and methods in the transportation of milk and allied products and the handling of the same;

(C) Through experiments and investigations and bacteriological analyses to be conducted by scientific experts to be employed by the Association, and the dissemination of the information so obtained among the members of the Association;

(D) By the exchange among the members of ideas and the results of experience.

SECOND: To improve the conditions under which the business of buying, selling and dealing in milk and its allied products shall be carried on through coöperation with the Department of Health and other state or local officials in forwarding appropriate legislation or sanitary regulations or sanitary ordinances and in opposing legislation or regulations inimical to the proper conduct of such business.

THIRD: To coöperate with other societies or bodies having similar objects in obtaining such desired results.

Nothing herein contained shall include any regulation regarding either the price for which milk or allied products shall be bought by the members nor the price at which the same may be sold, nor shall any regulations be adopted by the Association having such objects in view.

#### ARTICLE XI.

Members agree as a condition of membership to comply with the state and municipal laws and regulations and to observe all sanitary measures promulgated by controlling authorities.

#### ARTICLE XII.

SECTION 1. Members agree to give access to authorized representatives of the Association, delegated by its Board of Trustees or an Executive Committee of such Board, to make inspections of their plants and equipments, or conduct investigations as to their methods of carrying on their business, including the taking of samples for analysis to determine whether or not members are complying with the obligations assumed, as outlined in Article XI.

SECT. 2. The work of inspection and investigation shall be delegated to the Consultants and Analysts of the Association, who shall make a report in writing of their findings in the Executive Committee.

To properly carry on the business of the Association as outlined in the above Articles, there is elected a board of Trustees of fifteen members, and from this Board an Executive Committee of six is appointed. In addition to the Executive Committee there are five other committees. These are: the Membership Committee, the Finance Committee, the Auditing Committee, the Sanitary Committee, and the Law Committee. Briefly, the duties of these committees are as follows:

The Membership Committee passes on applications for membership and, where thought desirable, make plans to increase the membership.

The Finance Committee considers plans for the raising of funds, which is done on an assessment basis, an annual charge being made on each wholesale and retail wagon operated by the members of the Association. It was in this way that the larger dealers who were better able were required to pay a larger share of the expenses of the organization.

The Auditing Committee audits the bills and accounts of the Treasurer.

The Sanitary Committee considers the sanitary problems surrounding the production of milk at the dairy farms, the transportation to the creameries, the handling at these points, the reshipment to the city, the pasteurizing and bottling, the washing of utensils and containers, the storage and delivery and all other problems of a sanitary nature.

The Law Committee considers and reports upon such sanitary ordinances as may be adopted by the local authorities or such laws as may be proposed or passed by the state legislature. It also considers such legislation as may be desired by the membership for the purpose of improving the conditions surrounding the business.

Meetings of the Association are held monthly, and sometimes more frequently, if circumstances demand.

So far as the writer knows, this is the first organization of milk dealers attempting to improve the sanitary conditions surrounding the milk business. In order that it may be clear that such an endeavor is actually being made, it may be of interest to know, very briefly, some of the things which the organization has done since its reincarnation in 1910.

Perhaps the most interesting and spectacular thing which the organization has done has been the issuance of its educational leaflets.\* So far, three of these have been issued. The first, known as "The Care of Milk in the Home," was prepared for the purpose of instructing the consumers as to their duties in the matter of the handling and care of milk. It is rather an interesting coincidence to note that while this circular was being prepared, a similar circular was being written by the Department of Agriculture in Washington and by the department presided over by the food commissioner of the State of Illinois. Later we learned of a similar leaflet, although not quite so comprehensive or specific, which had been pre-

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\* Copies of these will gladly be sent to any interested reader.

pared by a Doctor E. C. Levy, the health officer of Richmond, Virginia. The publication of this leaflet was commended very generally the country over and it was reprinted in several State Health Department *Bulletins* and other periodicals. Women's organizations at various times demanded large numbers for distribution among their members, and the Association felt very well repaid for the effort and expense involved. It is naturally very difficult to estimate the exact effect that such a publication may have upon the consumers in so large a city as New York. The effort, however, was so encouraging that somewhat later the Association published the second of the series, known as "The Care of Milk in the Store." Conditions surrounding the sale and distribution of milk from grocery stores, delicatessen shops and the like in the City of New York were far from being satisfactory, either to the health authorities or to the dealers themselves. It was hoped that the publication and distribution of this circular would help to explain the wise regulations which the Health Department had made and which it had been unable very largely to enforce. The Association believes that the distribution of this circular supplemented to a large and profitable extent the excellent work of the local authorities and other organizations aiming to bring about the same good ends. This circular also received favorable comment and has had a wide circulation.

The third of the series has only just been published. It aims to give some simple directions to the farmer regarding the sanitary condition surrounding the production of milk and to explain the requirements which have been made by the New York City Board of Health and by the state authorities, and which have been so irksome to such a large number of producers. None of these circulars are aimed to be exhaustive memoranda on their respective subjects. Least of all is this the case, perhaps, with this third circular. Nevertheless, the Association believes that there is sufficient information conveyed so that if the instructions are followed, a very material help to the progress of the cause of clean milk will have been given.

A brief résumé of the subjects discussed at the monthly meetings may be of interest. One of the first of these subjects to command the attention of the Association was the proposed ordinance for hermetically sealing milk bottles containing pasteurized milk. A great deal of time and money was spent in the investigation of so-called devices for effecting a perfect seal, and finally the regulation was withdrawn by the local board of health.

A bill for the regulation of the capacity of milk bottles and cans was very carefully considered by the Association, and certain modifications of the bill were suggested through the Law Committee of the Association to those having it in charge in the state legislature.

The requirements for the pasteurization of milk were very thoroughly discussed on several occasions. Conferences were held with the local

health commissioner on this subject and certain modifications making the regulations practical were obtained.

The question of the transportation of the milk under proper refrigeration conditions was vigorously taken up by the Association with the milk agents of the various railroads transporting milk to this city. A decided improvement in the manner in which the cars are iced and in the temperatures of the milk on receipt in New York City was obtained as a result of this campaign.

The question of the possible prohibition of the sale of so-called "loose milk" to be dipped from cans in grocery and other stores was being seriously considered by the local board of health. Several meetings to discuss this problem were held by the Association. Finally a resolution, of which the following is a copy, was adopted:

*Resolved*, That it is the sense of this meeting of the New York Sanitary Milk Dealers Association that the rescinding of all permits for the sale of loose or dipped milk from grocery or delicatessen stores would in our judgment be a great mistake; and be it *further resolved* that we approve of such action on the part of the Department of Health looking to the sanitary regulation of such stores as will make them proper places for the sale of loose or dipped milk, and that we approve of the cancellation of permits to such stores as do not satisfactorily comply with the proper sanitary regulations of the Department of Health.

The question as to whether or not milk bottles and cans should be cleaned before they were returned to the country creameries was discussed with great fervor at several of the meetings. The New York City Sanitary Code requires that—

It shall be the duty of all persons having in their possession bottles, cans or other receptacles containing milk or cream which are used in the transportation and delivery of milk or cream to clean or cause them to be cleaned immediately upon emptying. No person shall use or cause or allow to be used any receptacle used in the transportation and delivery of milk or cream for any purpose whatsoever other than the holding of milk or cream; nor shall any person receive or have in his possession any such receptacle which has not been washed after holding milk or cream or which is unclean in any way.

This section of the Sanitary Code, it is believed by the milk dealers, is unjust. Not that they are unwilling to clean their milk bottles and cans, but they believe that the ordinance should be enforced on the consumer and not on the dealer. As it now stands, if a dealer takes up a dirty can or a dirty bottle which the consumer has failed to clean, he is liable to arrest. This matter was very carefully considered and a long memorandum prepared and sent to the Department of Health indicating the attitude of the dealers toward this matter. Legislation on this subject proposed at Albany was carefully discussed and a committee of the Association appointed to appear at the hearings and present the views of the New York dealers.

At one of the regular monthly meetings there was a demonstration of the

proper use of the Babcock machine for the determination of the butterfat content of milk and cream. At this meeting the dealers had present their creamery foremen, who operate these machines at the creameries,. The various pitfalls into which the inexperienced man is likely to drop were carefully pointed out, and the dealers were urged to have these tests made regularly for their own self-protection.

At another meeting the commissioner of agriculture of the State Department of Agriculture appeared and discussed the state laws with reference to milk and its products.

On still another occasion certain suggestions were discussed for the improving of conditions surrounding the production of milk at the dairy farms. It was decided to impress upon the farmers the desirability of using a small-mouth milk pail. Other practical suggestions of this kind were considered and the dealers urged to promulgate the suggestions amongst their dairy patrons.

At one of the meetings consideration was given to the question of the growth of bacteria in milk at different temperatures and under different conditions. It was interesting to observe how keenly the dealers listened to this discussion and how much they had learned of the bacteriology of milk since the organization of the Association, and how intelligently they were able to discuss the questions presented.

It was very early discovered after the organization of the Association that the milk dealers could be interested in these sanitary problems, if for no other reason, from a selfish motive. Hundreds of thousands of cans of milk formerly shipped to this city were lost because of souring, due to the improper care of the milk either at the farm, the creamery, or in transit. This meant thousand of dollars of loss to the dealers, and when the reasons for this loss were clearly understood, the dealers were only too willing to take such steps as they could to improve the conditions and prevent this drain on their profits; not that they were unwilling to take these steps because of their interest in improving the supply outside of the selfish interest of the stoppage of waste. Practically all of the dealers were anxious to obtain and to serve a high grade of safe milk, especially where it was to be used for infant feeding.

In New York City the conditions surrounding the milk business, starting back at the dairy farms and following the supply to its final consumption, are today fully 100 per cent. better than they were ten years ago. We believe that the work of this Association is responsible to a very considerable extent in this improvement. It is confidently expected that this good work will be continued and that the efforts of the Association and its individual members in the future will bear even greater fruit than has been the case in the past. There is no question but what the influence of the dealer with the farmer who supplies him with his milk is greater than

the more or less arbitrary authority of the city inspectors who in very many instances are none too well posted with regard to their duties and who, to say the least, are not always diplomatic. There has been roused in the past a very strong and stubborn resistance on the part of the farmers to the Health Department regulations. When these regulations have been explained in a diplomatic way by the dealers or their representatives there has practically always developed a willingness on the part of the dairy farmer to do anything reasonable within his power to improve his conditions.

The institution of similar organizations in the larger cities of the country would be a very powerful influence for the bringing about of the more or less ideal conditions under which milk should be produced and sold.